

DEADLY DOZEN

Bad driving habits and manners are more than inconsiderate and rude--they are dangerous and illegal, and they just add to the congestion and general aggravation. If you find yourself in the following list, it's never too late to change:

- **GOING TOO FAST.**

It's a simple fact of physics: The faster you go, the less time you have to react to emergencies, the harder you hit, and the greater your chances of death or serious injury in an accident. Speeding is responsible for 30 percent of all fatal crashes. It is also the main reason two out of three fatal accidents occur on rural highways, although most accidents happen in urban areas. So who wants to die or get tickets? Simply obey speed limits and match your speed to traffic, road and weather conditions, and your driving ability.

- **IGNORANCE.**

In a 1989 poll of 500 drivers, 92 percent considered themselves good or excellent drivers. Yet, a third of those drivers incorrectly believed that a flashing red traffic light meant to "proceed with caution." (It means to come to a complete stop, then proceed with caution.) In this case, ignorance could be fatal, so make sure you have a thorough knowledge of all traffic laws, signs and markings. Once you know them, obey them.

- **TAILGATING.**

Following too closely is a dangerous habit. People don't realize that at 60 miles per hour, it takes the average car 120 to 160 feet to stop. At 80 miles per hour, it takes 220 to over 300 feet to stop. If someone is tailgating you, look for an opportunity to move over.

- **BAD PASSING.**

Keep right, except to pass; pass in a smooth, progressive manner and move back over as soon as you can clearly see the car in your rearview mirror. Don't "slingshot" around other vehicles. If someone wants to pass you, don't speed up to

make it more difficult or impossible. Pass only on the left. Passing on the right is against the law in some places; it is more dangerous because you are less visible to other drivers, who generally don't expect to be passed on the right. Never use the shoulder or "breakdown" lane to skirt traffic, and never try to back up on the shoulder if you have missed your exit ramp or turn--these are serious offenses to most police departments.

- **FAILURE TO USE TURN SIGNALS.**

Your chances of preventing an accident are great, even if you make a mistake, if other drivers know what you are going to do well in advance of turning or making lane changes. Once you have used turn signals, don't forget to turn them off.

- **NOT ALLOWING A MERGE.**

We do a lot of lane-merging today (e.g., entrance and exit ramps, three lanes to two, two to one). When it is the other driver's turn to merge, let him or her in. This simple act of courtesy is the fastest and most logical way to keep traffic moving smoothly.

- **POOR LANE DISCIPLINE.**

The rules are simple but widely ignored. Stay in your lane. Don't ride the center line, drift from side to side, zig-zag through traffic, bully your way into another lane, or hog the fast lane. When changing lanes, look before you leap. Even with your mirrors adjusted, you can't see what is hap-

pening one lane over, so turn your head and look over your shoulder for a last-second check, and always use your turn signals. Pay attention to lane markers and traffic-light arrows.

- **FAILURE TO YIELD!**

That triangular sign means what it says--it doesn't mean hit the gas, come to a complete stop, or muscle your way into traffic. If there is no yield sign, the rules of the road dictate that cars entering the roadway always yield to those on the roadway, and cars making a left-hand turn must yield to oncoming traffic. At an intersection with four-way stop signs, the first one to arrive has the right of way. Otherwise, yield to the car on your right. Never hesitate to pull over for an emergency vehicle with its lights flashing or the siren going. Failure to immediately yield right of way immediately can endanger you, your passengers, and the people the emergency vehicle is trying to reach. Motorists also should always yield to pedestrians, even if there is no cross-

section. If you have time to brake when the light changes to yellow, do it! To protect yourself from red-light and stop-sign runners, be cautious at all intersections, even if you have the right of way. Look both ways before proceeding through an intersection, and be prepared to brake or take evasive action. At 30 miles per hour, you can stop 20-25 feet sooner if you have your foot on the brake. You can also slow your car faster and stay out of harms way by pulling to the right.

- **BLOCKING AN INTERSECTION.**

This habit is selfish and inconsiderate. Try to anticipate the traffic flow, and never drive into an intersection when you know there isn't a chance to make it across before the traffic light changes. If you have blocked a pedestrian crosswalk, don't back up. People may already be walking behind you.

- **BAD MANNERS.**

This includes a host of sins - cursing, obscene gestures, excessive horn honking, loud stereo, refus-



walk. Give motorcycles and bicycles the same rights and courtesies as any other vehicle, and come to a complete stop in both directions (unless it is on a divided highway) for school buses displaying stop signs and flashing red lights.

- **IGNORING RED LIGHTS AND STOP SIGNS.**

This violation is like forgetting to breathe. Stopping for red lights and stop signs is the most basic rule of driving. Ignoring the rule could make you responsible for a serious accident. A red light--solid or blinking--or a stop sign means to stop completely. A yellow light means caution. It does not mean to accelerate and push your way through an inter-

ing to merge, littering (including cigarette butts) and just about any other act of rudeness or selfishness that fouls the driving environment. A little more courtesy and consideration by all of us could make driving safer and more pleasurable.

- **GOING TOO SLOW.**

Although drivers seldom get ticketed for this violation, it is a major irritant to other motorists. If you see traffic backing up behind you, look for an opportunity to move over or even to pull off the road. On a multi-lane highway, merge quickly, and then stay in the lane that is moving at the most comfortable speed for you. Don't hog the left lane.